

Docket Item #31-A
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #96-0001
LNT/U.S. PATENT OFFICE PROPOSAL

Planning Commission Meeting
June 4, 1996

ISSUE: Consideration of an amendment to the Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan Chapter of the 1992 Master Plan to change the land use designation of the subject property from UT/Utilities and transportation to OCM(100)/Office commercial medium (100).

APPLICANT: LNT Associates
by Barbara P. Beach, attorney

LOCATION: 5001 Eisenhower Avenue

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, JUNE 15, 1996: Approved the Planning Commission recommendation.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, JUNE 4, 1996: On a motion by Mr. Wagner, seconded by Mr. Ragland, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations. The motion carried on a vote of 5 to 0. Mr. Dunn and Mr. Leibach were absent.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with the staff analysis.

Speakers:

Barbara Beach, representing the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends **approval** of a master plan amendment to change the land use designation of the subject site from UT/Utilities and transportation and OCH/Office commercial high to OCM(100)/Office commercial medium (100).

BACKGROUND

The applicant, LNT Associates, proposes to amend the master plan and zoning map for the subject property to OCM(100)/Office commercial medium (100) in conjunction with a proposed development at 5001 Eisenhower Avenue for the United States Patent and Trademark Office (PTO) relocation, with a proffer limiting the rezoning for the purpose of the PTO.

The subject property is 16.75 acres of non-operating railroad right-of-way the applicant is purchasing from the Norfolk Southern Railroad Company. The railroad property is located behind properties that front on to Eisenhower Avenue, beginning at the west at Metro Road and proceeding east to where Clermont Avenue dead ends contiguous to land owned by the City of Alexandria. The applicant owns one of the properties with frontage on Eisenhower Avenue--5001 Eisenhower--and seeks to consolidate the railroad property with the 5001 parcel after the master plan and rezoning. The result will be an oddly shaped parcel, something of an elongated "T" shape.

The applicant does not propose to build on the subject site (except for a driveway), but rather seeks to use the land for the purpose of increasing the amount of commercial floor area that can be built on the applicant's site at 5001 Eisenhower Avenue to accommodate the more than two million square feet of office space that is needed to qualify for the bid solicitation by the Government Service Administration (GSA) for relocating the PTO. The GSA bid solicitation requires that all competing applicants have all the necessary zoning in place prior to submission of a bid application.

The site is located within the Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan and has been a railroad right-of-way since the 1800's. The Landmark/Van Dorn Small Area Plan designates the subject site UT/Utilities and transportation, with a very small area included in a separate parcel designated OCH/Office Commercial High. The property is located behind properties along Eisenhower Avenue that have long been a mix of light industrial (warehousing and distribution), commercial mixed uses (warehouse-office, warehouse-retail) and office. The 1992 Small Area plan states that the area is a desirable location for intense commercial development for several reasons. First, the area has excellent access to transit facilities with the Van Dorn Metro Station. Second, it is between two major interchanges of the Beltway; to the west is the existing Van Dorn interchange and to the east is the Clermont Avenue

interchange which is currently under construction. Third, Eisenhower Avenue itself is a major arterial connecting the east and west ends of Alexandria. Also, intense commercial development will not impact existing residential neighborhoods.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Master Plan for this area designated the land UT/Utilities and transportation based on the ownership and boundaries of the property.

Two small parcels of railroad property adjacent to the operating railroad property were designated OCM/Office commercial medium by the Master Plan because they were separate parcels from the remainder of the railroad property.

The subject property was designated UT/Utility Transportation because it was railroad property, part of a parcel that contains operating railroad. It was not anticipated that a portion of the site would be subdivided for future redevelopment. However, if the subject property is to be removed from the operating railroad parcel and made available for development, it is consistent with the goals of the Landmark Van Dorn Small Area Plan that it be redesignated and rezoned to OCM-100/Office Commercial Medium, which is the designation of the all the properties along Eisenhower Avenue except for those nearest the Metrorail station, which are designated OCH/Office Commercial High.

Although staff believes that OCM is the appropriate designation for the property if it ceases to be part of the operating railroad parcel, staff has some concerns about these proposed amendments because of the way the land is proposed to be subdivided and consolidated once it is redesignated and rezoned. This issue is discussed in more detail in the subdivision report being processed for the 5001 proposal (SUB #96-0005). In order to rezone the railroad land it must first be subdivided from the larger, operating railroad parcel. The applicant then seeks to consolidate the subject property with the parcel at 5001 Eisenhower. This will create an very oddly shaped parcel. And, since the railroad site is largely unbuildable because of its shape and the fact that much of it is in wetlands, the effect of the master plan redesignation and rezoning is essentially to transfer density from the railroad parcel to the 5001 Eisenhower Avenue parcel. If the subject property were to be consolidated in a different fashion, i.e., with several other parcels along Eisenhower Avenue, the resulting parcelization would be consistent with the existing pattern in the area, and any "transfer of density" that might occur would not cross such great distances and would be more rational. Staff would not be concerned with such a result.

Nonetheless, staff is supporting the proposed master plan amendment and rezoning because the proposed designation is consistent with the master plan and because staff's reservations are essentially subdivision issues. Staff is supporting the subdivision in this case in order to facilitate the applicant's bid for the PTO, one of the City's primary economic development goals.

In any case, the applicant has proffered the rezoning to a successful bid for the PTO; therefore neither the master plan amendment nor the rezoning will occur unless it is in conjunction with that development proposal. Likewise, the subdivision will not occur unless it is in conjunction with the PTO development, because the subdivision and consolidation are in turn conditioned on the rezoning.

STAFF: Sheldon Lynn, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Kimberley Johnson, Chief, Development; Gregory Tate,
Urban Planner.

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WHEREAS, under the Provisions of Section 9.05 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission may adopt amendments to the Master Plan of the City and submit to the City Council such revisions in said plans as changing conditions may make necessary; and

WHEREAS, an application for amendment to the LANDMARK/VAN DORN SMALL AREA PLAN section of the 1992 Master Plan was filed with the Department of Planning and Zoning on February 29, 1996 for changes in the land use designations to the parcels at 5001 Eisenhower Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Planning and Zoning has analyzed the proposed revision and presented its recommendations to the Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on June 4, 1996 with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendment is necessary and desirable to guide and accomplish the coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the LANDMARK/VAN DORN SMALL AREA PLAN section of the City; and
2. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with the overall goals and objectives of the 1992 Master Plan and with the specific goals and objectives set forth in the LANDMARK/VAN DORN SMALL AREA PLAN section of the 1992 Master Plan; and
3. The proposed amendment shows the Planning Commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the LANDMARK/VAN DORN SMALL AREA PLAN; and
4. Based on the foregoing findings and all other facts and circumstances of which the Planning Commission may properly take notice in making and adopting a master plan for the City of Alexandria, adoption of the amendment to the LANDMARK/VAN DORN SMALL AREA PLAN section of the 1992 Master Plan will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents of the City;

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Alexandria that:

1. The following amendment is hereby adopted in its entirety as an amendment to the LANDMARK/VAN DORN SMALL AREA PLAN section of the 1992 Master Plan of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in accordance with Section 9.05 of the Charter of the City of Alexandria, Virginia:

Change the designation of railroad properties shown on the subdivision plat for case REZ #96-002 from UT/Utility Transportation and OCH/Office Commercial High to OCM/Office Commercial Medium.

2. This resolution shall be signed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission and attested by its secretary, and a true copy of this resolution forwarded and certified to the City Council.

ADOPTED the 4th day of June, 1996.

W. B. Hurd, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sheldon Lynn, Secretary